MORAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The world is in a time when nonchalant attitude seems to characterize every society and one tends to wonder what really is responsible for such attitude. It does look like generations have been raised without a true sense of morality. This paper suggests that to develop a nation, the requisite knowledge and skills that are essential for transformation of individuals and re-enacting national values are necessary, and this will produce people who imbibe socially acceptable behaviours and positive habits that are necessary for development of self and society. The paper further examines the concept of moral education as a requisite for meaningful growth and sustainable development in Nigeria. Again, it makes clear the concept of development against the common misconstrued idea of development. The paper recommends that proper attention be given to qualitative education that deliberately trains both the head and the mind of the contemporary Nigerian child.

KEYWORDS: Morality, Moral education, Curriculum, Growth, Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Every individual has some measure of values that are responsible for the individual’s action and inaction. Such values are also responsible for bad or good behaviour. Schools have been the most effective medium of transmitting these values to the society. It is worth noting that religion plays a significant role in inculcating moral values. Sandeep (2015) says, “Historically, moral teachings have been central to all religions. For instance, historically speaking, since the time of the Bible, moral teachings have been central to Judaism. The Bible is, at its core, a book of ethical teachings”. Education is primarily aimed at achieving this desirable goal of inculcating moral values. Maraiye (2009) opines that “Moral education has always been the aim of education”. School was not only to make people smart but also to make
them good, though this was lost to industrialization at some point. Maraiye consents to this by saying that, “However, with industrialization, the moral aim of education has been reduced to the background as the demands of capitalist markets centered mainly around the provision of skilled manpower, culturally ready to integrate into labour markets”. This became the waterloo of the moral skills expected of people in the society.

The return of moral education became necessary considering disturbing trends both within schools, and in the wider society. Maraiye (2009) suggests that “Mounting discipline problems culminating in violent outbursts, alarming rates of teenage pregnancy and drug abuse are phenomena often explained by the breakdown of the family or are generally situated in the aftermath of industrialization”. He also added that “Many have also located the dysfunction of the school as one contributing to the degeneration of social mores. Prime among these dysfunctions is the fact that schools are not adequately providing for child and adolescent development, that is, moral education”. This indisputably shows the central place that moral education occupies if any society must experience any meaningful growth and sustainable development. This emphasis on the centrality of moral education is what this paper sets out to achieve.

The concept of moral education has been perceived differently by various individuals or groups. Maraiye (2009) posits that,

Those who believe that we need to provide for some form of moral education in our curriculum are not a homogeneous group. Amongst them we find, at one extreme, the traditionalist who argues that we should return to the good old ways of teaching values through religious literature or some other relevant material of universal significance. At the other extreme, some argue that rather than teach values, adults have to model desirable behaviour and the school’s hidden curriculum must be used to help children become morally autonomous adults. (43-46)

Unfortunately, the concept of development has been misconceived by the Nigerian society to be what it is not. This, to a large extent, is due to what the elites and the curriculum must have interpreted it to be to the peril of the true idea of growth and sustainable development. It is intended that this paper will help to stir in the minds of Nigerians the desire to pursue morality which is the bedrock of true growth and sustainable development. The paper will look into the concept of moral education and sustainable development. Also, it will point out how moral education can be inculcated. Some problems associated with the teaching of moral education will be enumerated and finally, conclusion and recommendations will be made.
CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

a. Moral Education

Morality is an ingredient of life that must not be handled with levity though it is a complex concept with diverse theories. Amaele and Daniel (2014) agree that “all the definitions of morality point to the fact that it is concerned with the principles of good and bad or right and wrong with a preference for the good and the right. It is the difficulty of determining what actually is right or wrong that has made the concept an academic issue that has elicited a lot of theories.” Morality has to do with the character and attitude of an individual which must have been acquired over time. The goodness or badness of one’s behaviour is so much dependent on the values that were instilled and inculcated in the individual right from the home to the school and to the society. A morally principled person would foster and protect human values of life, justice, honesty, goodness, kindness, selflessness among others and abhor murder, stealing, incest, cheating, bribery, corruption, embezzlement, cultism and other activities regarded as evil by the society. Oluwagbohunmi (2013) is of the view that “morality involves human efforts to deal with good or bad, right or wrong and of what one ought to do”. Morality as observed by Deng (2011) is

basically concerned with the development of sound character in the child so that virtues like goodness, rightness, truth, respect for law and authority, forgiveness, honesty, sympathy, diligence, self-imposed discipline and obedience among other virtues are internalized by the child. One of the important aims of the Nigerian educational system is the inculcation of six value clusters one of which is moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relation. This includes specific moral values of being God fearing, honest, responsible and forgiving. The question one may ask is: Is the Nigerian educational system achieving this very important aim of developing a sense of moral values in the Nigerian child which would consequently lead to national development? (p. 54-55)

No nation should exchange the moral sensibility of its citizens if such a nation is planning to make any remarkable progress. The ability to judge correctly and to discern what is generally beneficial to the society is the product of one’s sense of morality. The government can make effort to build structures and construct roads for the benefit of its citizens but the ability to maintain those structures for a period of time to serve the purpose for which they were set up will depend solidly on the moral sense of maintenance culture of the people, which is also based on their value system. This is also seen in the perception of dignity of labour that people have. People no longer think that hard work pays and have lost the sense of dignity of labour. Again, the idea that what affects the other person is none of my business since I am not affected directly is a reflection of the kind of society that the school system has produced. Without mincing words, these values are mostly transmitted through the school system.
is so because the 21st century child goes to school as early as 3 years. The formal learning lasts for over 16 years from kindergarten to university. Undisputedly, every child is a product of a thriving and productive or failing school system at a given time. Unfortunately, the present day school system only concentrates on educating the head and neglecting the mind of the child. This calls for a quick attention to, and an overhauling of the school curriculum in Nigeria, to ensure that a worthwhile and morally based educational system is put in place.

b. Curriculum

Curriculum is often, one of the main concerns in the educational field. There are varieties of definitions in relation to the term ‘curriculum.’ The diverse definitions of the term is due to the varied perceptions of stakeholders like students, educators, researchers, administrators, evaluators (Shao-Wen, 2012). According to Pratt (1994), the word “curriculum” is derived from the Latin verb currere, “to run.” Currere became a diminutive noun and meant a racing chariot or race track. An extension was made by Cicero who associated the term with curriculum vitae that means “the course of one’s life.” He also associated it with curricula mentis that metaphorically refers to “the (educational) course of the mind.” It was not until the nineteenth century that the term was commonly used in the educational field.

According to Hillary and Ethel (2018), “Curriculum is the set of courses and their contents offered at a school or university. A curriculum is prescriptive and is based on a more general syllabus, which merely specifies what topics must be understood, and to what level to achieve a particular grade or standard”. Shao-Wen goes further to view curriculum as a means of achieving specific educational goals and objectives. In this sense, a curriculum can be regarded as a checklist of desired outcomes. Generally speaking, curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in school or in a specific course or programme, as it is in moral education.

c. Sustainable Development

This is a broad concept to define due to its evolving nature. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to provide functional definitions. Sustainable development was a term first coined in 1980, which means to conserve the earth’s natural resources (Gana & Kuden, 2018). Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Be that as it may, the core issue for consideration in sustainable development is the persistence and continuity of development. It entails a qualitative transformation in the living standard of the people while maintaining environment and resources for posterity (Gotan, 2018). The question that comes
to mind is how can the environment and resources be maintained for posterity? This calls for an effective moral education in order to effectively transmit the right values and virtues like honesty, transparency, equity, fairness, justice, accountability and so on.

To achieve sustainable development, the right moral attitudes to the economy and growth must be consistently inculcated (Gana & Kuden, 2018). This can be achieved only when moral education is given the necessary attention that it deserves.

**INeULCAtinG MoRIAAL EDuCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVeLOPMEnt**

Moral education refers to the general role of the education process in developing a sense of moral values in children. The moral aspect of a child’s education is ultimately aimed at raising the level of moral judgment and behaviour to the optimum as required by the society (Ako & James, 2018). The educational system seeks to place a central emphasis on the teaching of the rights and interests of other people and what is considered to be right and proper (Denga, 2011). Undoubtedly, education appears to be the most appropriate vehicle to help change and build a worldview that is more in line with the aspirations of people in the context of globalization with its market compulsions, increased cultural contact and accelerated pace of technological change. Oluwagbohunmi (2013) sees education as “the acquisition of knowledge, the aggregate of all the process through which a person develops ability, attitude and other forms of behaviour with positive values in the society”. The school, as the chief agent of social transmission, has a key role to play in perspective building and in equipping the child with the necessary intellectual, emotional, social and moral resources to engage in a common process of valuation and decision taking in a multicultural context (Maraiye, 2009).

Education is a process of preparing children for a responsible life style and meaningful adulthood. For this reason, the process must become the pre-occupation of every society that is planning to grow. Education is very important to everyone, even though some people may not realize it at first. Education no doubt has served as a strong ‘bulldozer’, clearing underdeveloped cultures and incorporating them into the international capitalist human forum. The impact of education goes far beyond the intellectual development of the individual.

The meaning of the term ‘development’ has been viewed differently by different persons. Amaele and Daniel (2014) have this to say:

The concept of development has been misunderstood by many and wrongly pursued mostly in the third world countries like Nigeria. For these countries, development means the provision of social amenities or infrastructure. While it is true that one cannot do without infrastructure, it is difficult to defend the thesis that the provision of infrastructure and or industries alone can speak for the development of a place. They will rather lead to fundamental questions. For instance, when a state government embarks on massive road construction, building of model schools, giving scholarships, building hospitals and so on,
and fundamental questions must be asked such as: have the problems of traffic congestions and transportation in that place been addressed or tackled? When model schools are built, have the basic problems of education, in that area such as examination malpractice, quality education, truancy and drop out been addressed? The same questions will continue to beg for answers in all the sectors if efforts stop at the arbitrary distribution of infrastructure. Then can such ventures be termed development since they do not create any positive impact? There is the need therefore to understand what development is all about to enable a sufficient explanation of national development. (p.188-193)

Furthermore, Amaele and Daniel (2014: p.188-193) define development as “a multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and orientation of the entire economic and social systems. In addition to improvements in incomes and output, it typically involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes and sometimes even customs and beliefs”.

Oluwagbuhunmi (2013) reiterates that “the Nigerian education is expected to lead to inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes, training of the mind, the understanding of the world and acquisition of skills and abilities with which the individual lives and contributes to the development of the society”. It is felt on the physical development of the community, brings national integration, promotes socio-economic status, enhances political and social development of the people, and liberates the people whether they are minorities, slaves, outcasts or underprivileged to take up their rightful place in the society. Living a civilized life in the world today would have been impossible without education. This shows that everyone definitely needs education no matter who they are and what they plan to do in their life time.

Education is so important that it helps one go through everyday challenges. Oluwagbuhunmi (2013) says that:

People acquire intellectual and manipulative skills through education and training to develop the nation’s human resources. Experts such as doctors, engineers, accountants, educationists, lawyers, etcetera are products of the educational system of a country. These experts are change agents that are expected to generate ideas to bring about the desired national development. It is the duty of education to raise sufficient number of efficient people for a more prosperous society. (p. 9-15)

It is only education that can guarantee future and well cultured career men and women. Good education can produce committed and promising citizens who will be diligent in protecting the values and integrity of the nation. The future hopes and expectations of any society reside within the children living in it. Ako and James (2018) argue that “education should develop moral and social consciousness among the youths so that they can uphold the moral and social values of their societies. The knowledge acquired through formal education
assists citizens to bring desirable change to their communities leading to national development in general”.

Christian missionaries had played an unprecedented role in bringing to pass the objective of inculcating moral values in the children as a bedrock for building a strong community through the instrumentality of education. At first, the missionaries were merely interested in raising enlightened converts who would only help in the work of the ministry. As such, they trained men and women who will help the mission as members of the evangelism group, and also become teachers. But with time and dynamic changes witnessed in the society, the essence of Christian education enlarged to include providing a conducive atmosphere that would promote holistic education which is important for critical thinking and improvement in the living condition of the people in the fast changing society. Chika and Kanayo (2015) posit that at the earlier stage, the missionaries developed positive aims to create a strong and modern society capable of transforming the lives of the people economically, educationally and socially to enable them take their place as equals in the world community.

It is therefore the duty of educators to help students understand that education is not preparation for what they hope will be an easy, well-paid life as it does not set out to make an individual qualified solely for a ‘white-shirt’ job. The primary aim of education is to make it possible for an individual to live as full and happy a life as possible. It tries to make him like and appreciate the things that are worthwhile in life and tries to show him that there are more things in life than the pursuit of money and the power that money brings. Education tries to show the way to a life good for the soul, mind and body (Galgao, 2005). Oluya, Olu-Buraimoh and Okege in Oluwagbuhunmi (2013) state that:

the educational system should be one that motivates and stimulates creativity and draws largely on our traditions of values namely respect for positive Nigerian moral and religious values, ensure continuity of traditional values and their progressive updating to meet modern development, produce responsible citizenship and an ordered society, among others. The educational system should help learners to cultivate the habits, skills, opinions, tastes and virtues that are necessary for preservation of cultural values and flourishing of moral principles. (p. 9-15)

Children are in great need of proper education in order that they may be of use in the world. But any effort that exalts intellectual culture above moral training is misdirected. Instructing, cultivating, polishing, and refining youth and children should be the main burden of both parents and teachers. If the moral qualities of children are neglected by parents and teachers, they are sure to be perverted.
Development transcends just infrastructure like constructing roads and building model schools; development has to do with change in attitude, character development, beliefs and cultures. For national development to start and be sustained, there must be a sound moral base (Amaele & Daniel, 2014). Until there is increase in skills, capacity, discipline and sense of responsibility, development cannot be complete. The laissez-faire attitude of people towards other people and properties, especially public structures, is a clear indication of a society that is devoid of virtue where there is no sense of responsibility and accountability to one another. Maintenance culture seems to fizzle out of the minds and consciences of people and this, to a large extent, is as a result of the value system passed down to them by the older generation especially through the educational system. People fail to recognise that every action today will have a consequence tomorrow. This calls for deliberateness in enforcing moral education at all levels of education in Nigeria. Some possible ways by which schools can successfully transmit result oriented morals that will in turn make citizens more productive and resourceful are as follows:

1. Curriculum:

   The curriculum is the primary vehicle for accomplishing the task of developing students who live by moral principles and are committed to ensuring that the society thrives in all ramifications and to graduate students who are capable of interacting and participating effectively in today’s global society. The following can be included in the curriculum to help achieve the tasks mentioned:

   a. Work education: Galgao (2005) writes that “true education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure and stand the test of time”. However, in many schools today, mental training takes priority over moral development. Physical training is there in terms of sports, but the value of manual labour is overlooked.

   We cannot underestimate the importance of manual labor in relation to the moral development of students. Galgao (2005) also speaks of it “as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life”. He further says that “even if it were certain that one would never need to resort to manual labour for his support, still he should be taught to work. Without physical exercise, no one can have a sound constitution and vigorous health; and the discipline of well-regulated labour is no less essential to the securing of a strong and active mind and a noble character”. Galgao adds that students should devote a portion of each day to active labour. This will help them form the habit of industry,
encourage the spirit of self-reliance, and shield them from many evil and degrading practices that are so often the result of idleness. This is all in keeping with the primary objective of education; for in encouraging activity, diligence, and purity, we are coming into harmony with the Creator. In some mission schools in the past, it was a must that students work for some hours every week whether the student was rich or poor. This practice is fast disappearing.

b. Vocational courses: In some missionary schools, it was recorded that some hours of vocational courses like baking, sewing, scientific gardening, maintenance and carpentry, were taught as part of their curriculum and students were expected to offer these courses compulsorily before they could finish their ordinary level. Mission schools usually provided the best possible facilities for physical development and industrial training in addition to the highest mental and moral culture. There should therefore, be instruction in “agriculture, manufacturing (covering as many as possible of the most useful trades), economy, healthful cookery, sewing and hygienic dressmaking. A good example of such is in Boys’ Secondary School Gindiri where it is recorded that at one time it was the first and only school in the West African sub-region to offer Agricultural Science at the WASC level (Ulster, 2005).

c. Other academic courses: All subjects, even in disciplines such as mathematics or physics that on their surface may appear to lack obviously moral content, offer rich opportunities for helping students develop the skill of moral reasoning. Every subject can become a learning community where values of mutual respect, sensitivity to others’ needs, and cooperation are emphasized and discussed.

2. Hidden Curriculum:

A lot of things that adults do often have lasting consequences on the children. This is because children learn more from what they see from their parents and teachers. Galgao (2005) defines hidden curriculum as “those aspects of schooling other than the intentional curriculum that seem to produce changes in student values, perceptions, and behaviors”. He points out that in spite of “the proven negative influence of the hidden curriculum on pupil’s learning, its potential contribution to value education made it desirable from the viewpoint of one desiring optimal human development”.

Every nation desires to grow and develop progressively and to a large extent, it is connected to the quality and standard of the moral values that have been instilled into the citizens of such a nation. Every society is responsible for the kind of characters that permeate the various facets of human endeavours because every citizen is a product of the society. The
values that are enshrined and passed across right from the family system to the school system will determine how much growth and development such a society would achieve. The supreme importance of Christian missions in Nigerian nation building lies in the fact that it was upon them, almost entirely that the socio-political development of Nigeria was built. This is not to say that British administration had no political purpose for its presence in Nigeria. The efforts of Christian missions in the development of modern Nigeria can be clearly appreciated. They sought to effect social regeneration through the establishment of schools; on this they won the universal approbation of nation builders. They understood the fact that if there would be any reasonable national development, it must start with individuals through the instrumentality of schools. Kingdom and Makae (2013) strongly argue that “education is a crucial sector in any nation. Being a major investment in human capital development, it plays a critical role in long-term productivity and growth at both micro and macro levels”.

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING MORAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The teaching of moral education in Nigeria is faced with several challenges. Among the challenges are:

i. Lack of qualified religious instructors

It is a known fact that many schools in Nigeria do not have trained and qualified religious instructors to handle the teaching of moral education effectively. The schools use teachers who have read other unrelated disciplines to serve as religious instructors. This makes the teacher inept in using the right methods to achieve the desired goals.

ii. Insufficient fund

Because of lack of regard for the subject, little or no fund is allocated by the schools or government for training and retraining of religious instructors. Further training gives opportunity to update and be current with the various changes that take place within the discipline.

iii. Lack of instructional materials

Research has shown that schools and government do not care to provide materials that will aid teachers in teaching and learning. Though other subjects receive such support; religious instructors are left out of this gesture.

iv. Inability of some teachers to live by example

The most effective way to teach moral values for the teachers is to live out the virtues. The learners will emulate what they see their teachers doing. Bad or lack of role models has been a major problem confronting the teaching of moral values in schools and the society at large.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are therefore, put forward:

1. The curriculum of moral education should be strengthened and made for teaching at all levels of education. This will help in addressing the social ills which have permeated all levels of education in Nigeria.

2. The unnecessary emphasis on certificates which makes people to concentrate more on how to be successful in examinations by all means at the expense of morality should be discouraged. Often times, the society does not care how the certificates are acquired, whether by unethical ways or not. This should be discouraged by laying emphasis more on character than on the certificates.

3. Moral education should include, especially for younger children, socialization into appropriate patterns of conduct and, especially for older students, education for critical thinking and decision making that are parts of adult moral maturity.

CONCLUSION

This study has clearly shown that moral education is what a country like Nigeria should crave at moments like these. Every failure in governance and followership is as a result of lack of cultured character that should make one responsible, accountable and trustworthy. This failure, to a large extent, is due to the faulty school system that we have in Nigeria where emphasis is laid on certificates instead of character development. It is only through character development and morals that Nigeria will experience true growth and sustainable development.

REFERENCES


